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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2008

In Today's Papers

Afghan President Karzai and Pakistani President Zardari to Meet in Istanbul

Media outlets report that on Friday, President Abdullah Gul will bring together Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Pakistan's new President Asif Ali Zardari in Istanbul in an effort to improve ties and cooperation between the two countries. A tripartite summit among the three presidents was held in Ankara in April last year. In the declaration released at the end of their meetings, Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed to enhance relations on the basis of good neighborhood and respect for territorial integrity. The three countries also set up a joint working group which held its first meeting in Ankara in July 2007. This week's meeting will focus on the fight against terror, drug smuggling and organized crime. President Abdullah Gul said the meeting would be about "security in Asia, the future of Afghanistan and the friendly settlement of disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan," papers report.

Turkish Military Expels 5 Officers for Fundamentalist Islamist Ties

All papers highlight a statement issued by Turkish General Staff after the Supreme Military Council meeting, a supreme body headed by Prime Minister to regulate military promotions. The statement announced the expulsion of 24 military personnel, including 5 officers for ties with Islamic extremism. The military says 19 other officers were expelled for reasons related to drug addiction and ethics violations.

Due to TGS's statement which clarified "the decision was approved through a majority of votes," papers speculate about who stood against the expulsions. Radikal, Milliyet and Cumhuriyet are saying that like in previous meetings, PM Erdogan and Defense Minister Gonul were likely to have been against the expulsion decision. However President Gul has given a final approval, as papers noted.

PKK Claims Responsibility for AKP Attack

Papers report that a PKK-linked organization named "The Revolutionary Headquarters" claimed responsibility for yesterday's

parcel-bomb attack against the AKP headquarters in Istanbul, Beyoglu district. Last summer, the same organization claimed responsibility for the mortar attack on a military building in Istanbul. Sabah says one suspect was taken into custody and police continue to investigate. Meanwhile Prime Minister Erdogan visited the AKP site and said that 5 of the 10 wounded were released from hospital, but the two of the remaining are still in critical condition. Erdogan denounced the attack by saying "there is no where to go, and nothing to gain through terror and violence" as highlighted in the papers.

Tuzmen Predicts 'Difficult Year' for Turkey in 2009

Media outlets report State Minister Kursad Tuzmen said 2009 would be a difficult year for Turkey. Tuzmen predicts Turkey would be hit by the effects of "contraction and recession" from abroad. "In 2009, we project a 17 percent decrease in exports and a 25 percent decrease in imports," he said. Tuzmen added the AKP government will offer exporters incentives in order to encourage them to broaden their markets to Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

On Tuesday, opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal lashed out at the ruling AKP government, saying its failure to make a deal with the IMF prevented the government from releasing a package of economic measures. Baykal argued Prime Minister Erdogan was "deeply confused" over economic issues, recalling it was only few months ago that Erdogan was totally against a deal with the IMF. Opposition MHP leader Devlet Bahceli said the "illusory picture" drawn by Erdogan was evidence that "the PM is living on a different planet." Bahceli charged that the ruling AKP had destroyed the Turkish economy by selling the country's agriculture and national assets to pro-government groups through privatization. "This crisis will

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eventually send the AKP into the dark tunnels of history," Bahceli said.

Papers report Turkey's elite business group TUSIAD Chairwoman Arzuhan Yalcindag publicly disagreed with Prime Minister Erdogan when he said the worst part of the economic crisis was over. "The government is late in taking the necessary measures to cope with the crisis," Yalcindag emphasized, and she suggested that "a cut in value added tax rates could have a positive impact on Turkish markets." Meanwhile, papers report rating company Moody's said Turkey would enter a recession in 2009 without an IMF deal that markets have been asking for. Moody's official David Munves said "economic activities will start to recover in two years."

"Will Hillary Clinton Be Good for Turkey?"

Media outlets are asking if Hillary Clinton is going to be a Secretary of State that will 'be good' for Turkey, meaning will Clinton risk damaging relations with Turkey by supporting the passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution? Liberal Radikal notes, "The Armenian lobby is very happy to see Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State." In "Clinton Is Good Luck for Ankara," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "Experts in Washington say that Clinton was the best pick for Turkey," even though, "the Armenians are also happy." Mainstream Hurriyet reports, "For the first time, the U.S. President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State all support the Armenian Genocide Resolution."

CNN's Genocide Documentary

Liberal Radikal reports in "Discomfort with CNN's 'Genocide Documentary,'" that, "the documentary is creating uneasiness in Turkey regarding its depictions of Armenian genocide claims." CNN's Christiane Amanpour's documentary entitled "Scream Bloody Murder" is set to air on CNN International on December 5th and examines ethnic violence from the 20th century until present day in Darfur, Sudan.

Ruling Party Disbanded in Thailand

The top international story today focuses on the Thai constitutional court's decision to disband the ruling party and ban the prime minister from politics. Turkish press pay close attention to this case due to the parallels to recent Turkish politics - this past summer the ruling party in Turkey was almost closed due to allegations the party had become a source of anti-secular activities. While the Turkish constitutional court ruled against closing the ruling party, media note the Thai court did the

opposite. Secularist mainstream media cover the story in a sensationalist manner. Meanwhile, Islamist media appears stunned by the court decision and focus more on the corruption charges against the Thai ruling party. Mainstream Sabah reports in "A Judicial Coup," that the Thai prime minister "was banned from politics," as "the constitutional court decision to disband the ruling party stirs up the country." Liberal Radikal reports in "Judicial Sauce (Is Poured) on the Crisis in Bangkok," that, "demonstrators received good news from the court yesterday," as "the prime minister was banned from politics for five years due to charges of electoral corruption." Mainstream Vatan reports, "It Wasn't The People Who Overthrew The Government, It Was the Judges Who Overthrew the Government!" Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports simply, "The Court Overthrew the Government." Sami Cohen of mainstream Milliyet notes, "This Time the Court Overthrew the Government," and "the prior coup was orchestrated by the military," military coups are also a part of Turkey's recent political history. Islamist-oriented Zaman carries a wire report under the simple headline, "In Thailand, The Ruling Party is Closed." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak carries the banner headline, "They Closed the Party," due to "corruption during the elections."

Editorial Commentary on Domestic Turkish Politics

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "Given the current phase of the global financial crisis, the timing of local elections is not

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good for the AKP and Prime Minister Erdogan. Inevitably the economic crisis will deepen during the next couple of months with growing unemployment and a decline in economic wealth - this will create a nightmare situation for the ruling party. The month of February is the best time to make a better judgment about the impact of the economic crisis on the government's approval rating."

Fehmi Kuru wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "Among Turkish intellectuals, there is a tendency to draw an analogy between the behaviors of politicians abroad and here in Turkey. When Indian government officials resigned after the terrorist attack, many papers presented it as an example of responsible behavior. When President Bush wanted a war in Iraq, there were many leaders in this country who strongly defended his thesis. Have they ever thought about quitting as the Iraq war now presents an example of big failure?"

Mehmet Kamis in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "'You either vote for us or for war,' DTP's co-chairperson Emine Ayna said in Bingol this week. It's not difficult to predict there will be a new terror wave in the lead up to the municipal elections, because they have no political argument other than terror. Terror will use the Nevruz Feast as a last opportunity before the elections in March. So far, the DTP municipalities have failed in providing services such as road, water, sewage and transport. They have done nothing to increase the life quality of the Kurds, and they stoke tensions again and again. The PKK's rhetoric and its policies are applauded by the DTP, but have brought nothing but death and distress for the Kurds."

Ali Bulac in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "In August, the British domestic intelligence service MI5 issued a report which says those who use terror don't know their religion well, and most of them don't even practice their religion. The report shows those who are involved in terror are above the age of 30, and the majority of them are married with children. Most of them are British citizens with legal status. Almost half of them are born and raised in Britain. Conducting politics through the faith of Islam is disrespectful and unfair. As the MI5 report shows clearly, terror is something totally different and has nothing to do with Islam or Muslims, who believe life is a gift from God."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- President Abdullah Gul will travel to Diyarbakir on December 8, the first day of the Feast of Sacrifice.

- Energy Minister Hilmi Guler said this week Turkey would decide on the proposal of a Russian company that submitted a bid for the construction of a nuclear plant in Akkuyu in the Mediterranean coastal city of Mersin.

- On Wednesday, President Abdullah Gul will open the Center for African Studies at Ankara University.

International News

- Greek Foreign Minister Dora Banoyannis criticized Turkey over not exerting efforts to resolve the problems of Cyprus and territorial waters in the Aegean.

- A study being briefed to Vice President-elect Joe Biden predicts the U.S. can expect a terrorist attack using nuclear or biological weapons before 2013.

- Croatia assumes its one-month presidency of the UN Security Council in New York.

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